

The “Secret Service” of the United States
by Louis Bagger

ON the fourth floor of the southern wing of the Treasury Building, in Washington, D.C., there are two rooms, opening out upon the wide, marble-tiled hall, over the always-closed entrance to which are inscribed the words, “Secret-Service Division of the Treasury Department,” and below, “*Positively no admittance.*” Within may be seen two large safes, desks, chairs, and sofas; some curious masquerade costumes—or Ku-klux uniforms, for that is what they really are—suspended from the walls; a number of photographs stuck over the mantels, over which is printed:

“REWARD!

\$5,000

FOR THE ARREST OF
THOMAS BALLARD, Counterfeiter,
Whose Photograph will be found below;”

and, in winter, a cheerful wood-fire blazing away on the hearth. Two or three officials are busily engaged at their desks, probably examining the reports received from “operatives” in all parts of the country; so that, with the exception of the curious masquerade costumes referred to, it will be seen that there is, at first sight, nothing in the appearance of these room to make them differ from the hundreds of other offices in that immense pile of granite known as the United States Treasury.

A closer examination of the premises, as we shall subsequently see, would, however, reveal to us sights of a very extraordinary character; but for the time being, at least, we will heed the forbidding card on the door, “Positively no admittance,” and go on to see what is really meant by the “Secret-Service Division of the Treasury Department;” how and where it operates; and what are the results accomplished by it.

It is well known that there are in the different departments of the Federal Government employed various detective forces—such as the inspectors of customs, special agents of the Internal Revenue Bureau, special agents of the Post-Office Department, etc., etc., and, in the same manner, the Secret-Service Division of the Treasury Department, which, however, differs from the other detective institutions in this—that it does not confine itself or its range of labor to any certain specialty, but takes cognizance of *all* frauds perpetuated against or upon the United States Government, while at the same time it makes the purpose of arresting and preventing the crime of counterfeiting more specially the object of its organization.

The extent to which these efforts prove successful must, of course, necessarily depend upon the adroitness of the *attachés* in anticipating the depredations of evil-doers, and lead to the discovery of the machinations and plottings of the dangerous and criminal classes of society. The old adage that “it takes a thief to catch a thief,” has been long since exploded—at least, in its literal sense; and the method pursued by the United States Secret Service only in part partakes of this principle. It might be termed, not inappropriately, a combination of Fouché’s and Vidocq’s

famous methods, differing entirely from the cumbersome systems of detection employed by the secret police of Prussia; the *inspectors* and *cabinet noir* of the late French Empire; the crown-spies of Spain; *kaiserliche Spione* of Austria; and the Oriental Russian style of setting one man to do a piece of work, detailing a second to watch him, and a third to watch the watchman. The system adopted by the present chief of the Secret-Service Division is more in accordance with the Bow-Street system of London, although somewhat modified to suit the demands and contingencies of the United States, with its much larger field of operation.

The necessity of some vigorous measures on the part of the government to suppress counterfeits on the national securities became apparent very soon after the first issue were followed by the counterfeits with such rapidity that hardly had the public had time to become familiar with the former when the latter would be in circulation, doing incalculable damage, and making havoc principally among the poorer classes, who could not so readily detect the spurious article. The evil soon became so great as to claim the attention of Congress, and an appropriation of one hundred thousand dollars (since increased to one hundred and twenty-five thousand per annum) was made by that body, and placed at the disposal of the Secretary of the Treasury, for the purpose of effecting measures for the suppression and eradication, if possible, of the crime and counterfeiting. This fund was immediately turned over to the Solicitor of the Treasury—the law-officer of the department—with instructions to use it to the best advantage for the purposes for which it was designed. This led to sundry experiments, terminating finally in the organization of the Secret-Service Division, in the summer of 1865, consisting of a “chief of division” and a number of subordinates—termed technically, “operatives.” As at present organized, the force consists of the chief, Colonel H. C. Whitley; chief assistant, T. C. Nettleship; and a large number of “chief operatives,” “operatives,” and “assistant operatives,” distributed all over the country—one, at least, in each judicial district—and all reporting to headquarters. The chief of division is the executive officer, and guides and directs his subordinates; but the Solicitor of the Treasury must approve the acts of the chief to render them valid. All commissions issued to operatives must also have his written approval; and any very important movement, involving the expenditure of unusual sums of money, must first be submitted to him.

The ramifications of the Secret-Service Division of the Treasury Department extend—as had been already stated—all over the country. Its agents are operating on the Canada border to prevent smuggling, and in Florida and Key West in the endeavor to stop the importation of cigars and tobacco from Havana without paying duty. There is a branch office of the division in every city of importance, as a commercial or monetary centre, in the United States, and each of these branches is under the immediate supervision of a chief operative, who is required to take charge of and give his exclusive attention to the district in which he has been assigned. The New-York branch, at No. 52 Bleecker Street, is virtually the headquarters of the division, although all reports and the results of captures, such as plates, counterfeit money, dies, stamps, etc., etc., are sent to the Washington office, and there put on record and preserved.

So much for the organization of the division, and now a few words in explanation of the peculiar system adopted by its chief in the detection of criminals.

In the successful detection and conviction of counterfeiters, which is the specialty of the division, it is absolutely necessary, says Colonel Whitley, to use counterfeiters against their confederates.

Long experience has demonstrated the fact that a spy in the camp, as a defective confederate, is more to be feared by an organized band of criminals than all other machinery of detection combined; and it is wellnigh impossible to detect leading counterfeiters, and, when detected, procure their conviction, without the use, as an entering wedge, of men tarnished with the same crime in a lesser degree, as none others can so fully have the confidence of a great criminal.

The criminal who has had a dozen illegal transactions with his confederate enters upon the thirteenth with the same good faith which characterized the previous twelve, and finds himself within the meshes of the law through the defection of the party with whom he has been dealing. It is true that a great many people find objectionable points in this mode of procedure, and therefore are opposed to it; but to them Colonel Whitley pertinently puts the question: "Is this effective mode of detection a wrong done to the criminal, or a right done to society?" In the experience of the very best detectives of the present day, modern crime has become a *science*, with which it requires the keenest intelligence and the most subtle ingenuity to cope successfully. Politics, religion, art, and all the appliances of steam, the telegraph, and chemistry, are pressed into its service; nothing is too sacred, or too vile, for its purposes. It is the same old story over again: "Desperate cases require desperate remedies."

Hence, in the detection of counterfeiters, it has been (since May, 1869, when Colonel Whitley was appointed chief of division) and is now, the aim of the force to secure the cooperation of one of the gang to be broken up, who, besides furnishing the necessary information and keeping the officers posted as regards the movements of the parties who are being "shadowed," may afterward serve as State's evidence against his former confederates. The inauguration of this effective system—somewhat similar to the plan after which the Bow-Street detective police operates—has created distrust and caused more alarm among the counterfeiters, as a class, than could have been accomplished by any other agency. The defection of a confederate strikes consternation into the ranks of crime, and opens the door for its final extermination. No better proof is required of the effectiveness of this system than the fact that counterfeiting on a large scale, as carried on extensively three or four years ago, is to-day virtually at an end; the counterfeiting now going on being confined to the comparatively small operations of "boodle-carriers" and second-rate "cony-men."*

In order to better illustrate the *modus operandi* of the division, I shall give, from the official records, a few interesting cases that may serve as illustrations. I will take, to begin with, the case of Bill Gurney, which is still fresh in the memory of most New-Yorkers.

In the month of August, 1870, there suddenly appeared in the Eastern cities an admirably-executed counterfeit twenty-dollar note on the Shoe and Leather Bank of New York. The intelligence of this unwelcome discovery was telegraphed all over the country to business-men, bankers, and others interested, putting the public upon their guard against this dangerous and well-contrived imposition.

* A "boodle carrier," in the *lingua* of counterfeiters, signifies the bearers and sellers of "boodle" funds, or counterfeit notes of a small denomination, such as fractional currency, etc. A "cony" man is one known as a banknote counterfeiter.

The chief of the Secret-Service Division arranged directly a plan to reach what he considered the probable source of the issue of this counterfeit. He dispatched one of his operatives to communicate with a notable “koniacker,”[†] surmising that this party knew something about it. The dealer was an “old settler”[‡] in the pernicious traffic, however, and it was no easy task directly to approach him without exciting suspicion.

The “koniacker” in question—an ex-State-prison bird—whose services it was deemed advisable to secure, and whom we will call X—, was consequently approached by the confidential agent of the chief, who, introducing himself as “Jake Buck,” asked if he wanted to *purchase* some “queer.”

“No,” said X—; “are you in the business?”

“I would like to *buy* some,” responded Jake.

After some further careful maneuvering, on the part of the two new acquaintances, it leaked out that X—, although not himself in the “business,” could and would introduce Jake to a “friend,” who, he thought, might accommodate him. Agreeably to this arrangement, the two met him again the following evening, X— having in his possession an admirably-executed twenty-dollar counterfeit, which Jake bought at half its represented value, say ten dollars.

“When can you supply me with some more?” asks Jake.

“Day after tomorrow,” is the answer.

“Hand over a hundred, then,” says Jake; and in due time, as per arrangement, the five twenty-dollar counterfeits are brought, and purchased by Jake at forty cents on the dollar, or thereabouts. At the same time, it is agreed that Jake shall take five hundred dollars’ worth at a still further discount, say thirty cents on the dollar.

And when they met again, by appointment, Jake pays over his one hundred and fifty dollars, in good money, and receives in return twenty-five new twenty-dollar counterfeit notes, which he is quite sure have all come from the same source that the *first* one started from.

This game was continued until the disguised detective had so completely gained the confidence of X— that the latter offered to introduce him to the manufacturer of the “cony.” According to appointment, therefore, the three met in a bar-room in Baxter Street, when it was agreed that that manufacturer—or Bill Gurney, for it was none other than he—should sell Jake a bundle of counterfeit twenty-dollar bills, for twenty cents on the dollar, as the trade now began to assume wholesale proportions.

The following week the bogus Jake purchased three thousand dollars of the counterfeits, at eighteen cents on the dollar, from Gurney direct, which were to be delivered the following

[†] “Koniacker,” counterfeiter, or “cony” man.

[‡] “Old settler,” an experienced rogue or operator.

evening, at the Tenth-Street Ferry, on the East River. Meanwhile, headquarters in New York were duly advised of the progress of the scheme, and the chief and another operative held themselves in the readiness to perform their *roles* in the play, when the time should come.

At the appointed hour—having thus managed already to have purchased several hundred dollars' worth of trash from Gurney's own hands, Jake repaired to the ferry-house at the foot of Tenth Street, to receive the last batch of "cony" bargained for. But, this time, Jake is not alone. He is accompanied by two strangers, one apparently a plain-looking person, and the other a slightly-intoxicated person who looks like a mechanic, and is smoking a clay pipe; but both are mixed among the throng which is waiting to cross in the next boat, being at no great distance from Jake, however. Bill Gurney is on the boat, but, before stepping ashore, carefully eyes the waiting passengers. There is nothing to excite his suspicions, however; he has the three thousand dollars in counterfeit notes on his person, and is anxious to exchange them for five hundred and forty dollars in good money. Jake Buck is there, and in a moment the two are together. In another instant, two men seize the counterfeiter, and he is handcuffed before he has had a chance to wink. These two men are none other than the parson and the drunken mechanic—or Colonel Whitley and his assistant. The counterfeit three thousand dollars are found secreted in the prisoner's breast coat-pocket, in a neatly-made-up package. On the day following, X— was arrested, and thus two shrewd counterfeiters were safely lodged in limbo.

The history of this noted counterfeiter who, at the time of his capture, took the lead among all "cony-men" and "shovers of the queer," in this country, is of sufficient interest to deserve some mention here. Bill, whose real name is William M. Gurney, was born and reared in Saratoga County, New York, of respectable parents. He first commenced operations, in his peculiar line of business, on the line of the Erie Canal, and afterward extended his traffic to New-York City, where his success in the counterfeiting business, and his wonderful luck in evading justice, enabled him to live in luxury and ease for a long period. He was on intimate terms with notorious counterfeiters and other criminals; among them, "Jerry Cowsden," "Ike Weber," "Cranky Tom Hale," "Bill Overton," and others, famous in the detective records and annals of State-prisons. The engravers, printers, and shovers, wanted a leader, and Bill was just the man for the position, which he occupied shortly after his arrival in New York.

For several years he went on successfully; one of his boldest operations being a plan to put upon the market one hundred thousand dollars in counterfeit notes upon the Fishkill Bank, New-York State.

The press for printing this large amount of counterfeits was established in New-York City. Plates were engraved, paper procured and prepared; but, then, one of the members of the gang "squealed" on his pals, and the whole concern was seized by Secret-Service officers. Three of the counterfeiters were captured, convicted, and sent to State-prison; but Bill, the prime mover in the plan, with his usual luck, escaped, and kept clear of the talons of the law.

This was before the war. When the rebellion broke out, Bill, nothing daunted, saw an excellent chance to "make money," by imitating the postal and legal-tender notes which then appeared. He went into it on a wholesale scale, and his efforts at this time were immensely profitable. He got out fair counterfeit plates of the \$1's, the \$2's, the \$10's, and the \$20's, which all succeeded

finely; but his specialty successful effort was an imitation fifty-dollar legal-tender, which proved the most dangerous counterfeit, as well as the most accurate imitation, of all that ever were got out of that denomination.

After fully half a million dollars of this dangerous note had been put upon the market, Bill was arrested on suspicion; but, so well had he covered up his tracks that nothing could be proved against him, and he was again released. His success with this operation led him to undertake a still greater venture; and he determined to go to work and introduce a bogus one-hundred-dollar compound-interest-bearing note, which were then greatly in demand and for which he thought he would find a ready market. Bill, consequently, by a liberal outlay of money, introduced an *attaché* of the Treasury Department, through the agency of a handsome woman—who figured somewhat prominently in the affair—to break his trust, and take a wax impression of the back of the plate, from which the genuine note was being printed, from which an electrotype was subsequently procured. The young man who had been led into this crime died suddenly, a short time afterward, in Washington, before he had been suspected of the crime of which he had been guilty; and little doubt remains that he was poisoned by the counterfeiters, who were afraid that he should become repentant and “peach” upon them and their operations.

An exact imitation of the back—which, owing to the intricate geometrical lathe-work, is the most difficult portion of a greenback to imitate successfully—having thus been obtained, some of the most skillful engravers in the country were engaged by Bill in producing the plate for the face of the note, which, with only one or two very unimportant variations, was also an exact copy of the Treasury Department’s genuine article. Then the notes were printed; and this new banking operation did, for a while, a thriving business. Seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars’ worth of the bogus one-hundred-dollar bills were put upon the market, and successfully disposed of by degrees, at good prices, before the trick was discovered and the game exploded. A descent was made upon the “factory,” which was located in Brooklyn, and all the plates, paper, ink, presses, with a great amount in counterfeit notes, were captured and sent to Washington. Bill Gurney himself was arrested, for the fifth or sixth time, in New York; but soon found himself at liberty once more, through some gerrymandering process known only to himself and those who then held him in custody, after having realized a handsome fortune by his operations.

But the old saying that “easy comes, easy goes,” proved also true in this case. Bill lost his ill-gotten gains by gambling, and soon found himself almost penniless. It became of prime necessity for him to start another “job,” which would put him in funds again; and this time he determined to try his hand at imitating the Newburg National Bank ten-dollar notes. This counterfeit, however, was not a success; the note was poorly executed and easily detected; and he found considerable difficulty in “shoving” it. Some of his confederates were captured and sent to prison; and it is doubtful if Bill realized any thing from this operation.

His next, and last strike, was the issue of the twenty-dollar counterfeits, which caused his capture, and, finally, his conviction and lodgment in the King’s County Penitentiary, where he is now serving out a sentence of ten years’ imprisonment.

The arrest of Gurney placed in the hands of the government the counterfeit twenty-dollar plate upon the National Shoe and Leather Bank—one of the best-executed counterfeit plates in the

collection, numbering upward of ninety sets, of the various denominations, now in the possession of the United States Government, through the agency of the Secret-Service Division.

Scarcely less interesting than the case of Bill Gurney, and affording another good illustration of the detective system pursued by the Secret-Service Division under its present efficient management, is that of Fred Biebusch, a notorious and successful counterfeiter, whose arrest, about two years ago, created considerable excitement all through the West, where he had chiefly been operating. His operations extended over the whole broad range from Illinois to Texas, and were marked by a degree of boldness, accompanied by success, that has rarely been equaled in the annals of counterfeiting, or crime of any kind.

The plan pursued by the detectives in this instance, to secure the arrest of Biebusch, did not differ materially from that employed in the capture of Gurney. As in that case, the cooperation of a confederate was secured. The man employed in this case was one Shelley, who had long been engaged in preparing the plates, etc., for Biebusch. Shelley was arrested in New York, in the midst of his nefarious labors, and voluntarily confessed his association with Biebusch, who was operating in the West. Interviews were had, and “deals,” or the sale and delivery of counterfeit notes, with the counterfeiter himself, by the decoys and pretended “cony” men—most of these transactions taking place near Biebusch’s residence, on Stoddard Street, near Clay Avenue, in St. Louis. In this manner, one “deal” was made of one hundred dollars’ worth of bogus ten-dollar United States Treasury notes, at twenty cents on the dollar; and several other deals followed, at the same price. On the 11th of January, 1869, two hundred dollars’ worth of the “cony” twenty-dollar notes was bought for forty-five dollars; and a short time afterward the last deal was effected for thirty dollars, purchased at twenty cents on the dollar. It was now thought that sufficient evidence had been obtained upon which to base a criminal charge; and Biebusch was arrested on the night of the 15th of February, at his private residence, where he was enjoying himself with his family. On the premises were found two new plates for making fifty-dollar and five-dollar counterfeit greenbacks, besides a plate for printing fifty-cent notes. A large quantity of counterfeit money, in twenty-dollar and fifty-cent notes, was also found in the house, besides various implements, supposed to be burglar’s tools.

Among the letters found in possession of the prisoner were the following characteristics, specimens, which I give *verbatim el literatim*:

“MEMPHIS, *November* 25, 1868.

“FRIEND FRED: Inclosed find post-office order for forty dollars, the amount I borrowed from you. I should of sent you the money sooner, but looked for a letter from you every day, and then thought I should come to St. Louis myself, but had concluded you are not going to strike, so I send you the money. Can’t you get your small or young stock ready to ship at the same time you ship your large or old stock. If you could it would save a great deal of trouble, and only have one trip. They are asking for nice young stock any day. Please drop me a few lines as soon as you get this. Tell me the knows, and let me kno[w] if you get this order all right. You will please accept my thanks for more favors.”

“This from your friend, etc.,
“BILL.”

And also the following “order”:

The official records of the United States Secret-Service Division are replete with accounts of incidents of a thrilling nature—more interesting than any romance ever written. They comprise almost a complete history of crime in all its phases, and are not by any means confined to the operations and captures of counterfeiters, although these form of the bulk of this unique library. One of the saddest examples on record in these archives of what may happen to a man who abandons himself to a vicious course of life is that of Mr. William M. Adams, ex-Mayor of Alleghany City, Pennsylvania. At one time occupying a proud and honored position among his fellow-citizens, and the head of a happy and interesting family, he fell from his high estate through the influence of liquor and bad associates. He lost his means, was reduced to dire want, took to passing counterfeit twenty-dollar notes on the Shoe and Leather Bank (made by Bill Gurney), was detected, arrested, tried, and convicted, and sentenced to pay a fine of one thousand dollars, with seven years' imprisonment in the Western Penitentiary of Pennsylvania. He is now a convict in the very city of which he formerly occupied the proud position as its chief magistrate. Truly, "romance is stranger than fiction."

A brief recapitulation of the results produced by the application of the system inaugurated by the present head of the division may be appropriately inserted here, the figures given being up to the close of the last fiscal year, June 30, 1872:

Of the most important and dangerous grade of counterfeiters, such as the engravers, printers, wholesale dealers, coiners, etc., two hundred and seven have been apprehended; of the lower grade, circulators, shovers, and minor operators, two hundred and ninety have been placed in limbo; of defrauders of the internal revenue, stamp renovators, etc., three hundred have been captured—a total of seven hundred and ninety-seven in the counterfeiting alone. Of the other revenue defrauders, dealers in cigars without legal stamps, whisky-sellers, smugglers of jewels, diamonds, laces, silks, gloves, etc., United States mail and bond robbers, etc., etc., there are over four hundred cases on record.

It is the opinion of the members of the detective force, from whom I gathered my information relative to the Secret-Service Division, that, next to the counterfeiters, smugglers are, as a rule, the most shrewd and sharp criminals with whom they come in contact. And no one will doubt this after reading the following authentic, officially recorded case of smuggling, which was detected by a custom-house "special" at Boston, at the close of the year 1867:

The especial attention of the Secret Service having been called to the fact that large amounts of valuable laces and jewelry found their way into this country in some mysterious manner, without paying duty, during the years 1866 and 1867, it was at least ascertained that these smuggled goods came through Boston. A "special" (Captain S—) was sent to the custom house at that port to "work up" the case, and for several months this gentleman was on the *qui vive* watching the European steamers carefully, but without avail. One fine morning, however, this officer, while on board of a steamer which had just come in from Havre, observed a large deal box, which was being transferred to the shore. His suspicion being aroused, he inquired what it contained, and was answered that it was a corpse—an American who had died abroad, and whose body was being sent home for the interment in his native soil, at the request of his mourning relatives. Not quite satisfied with this explanation, the officer ordered the box to be

opened. Inside there was a handsome black-walnut coffin. Still suspicious, he ordered the lid of the casket to be unscrewed, and there lay the dead man sure enough, the body slightly decomposed. The casket was quickly closed, and the box nailed up and taken away without further investigation.

A short time subsequently a similar occurrence took place. Another steamer arrived from France with another corpse aboard, it was said, addressed to other waiting, mourning friends in America. Somewhat confounded at the apparent mortality rate going on among American citizens in France, Captain S— ordered also this box to be opened before leaving the ship. This was done, and there as another elegant casket with silver mountings, handles, etc. This unscrewed as before, and there lay the corpse—the cold, blue face head and neck—there could be no question about the fact. The coffin-lid, which opened a third of its length upon silver hinges, was just being thrown back to its place when the officer insisted, to the surprise of the sailors, that the entire lid of the casket should be removed.

This was done at once, and, horrible to relate the fact, the trunk and bowels of the corpse were found to have been removed, and, in place of the contents for which intended, the cavity in the casket, for two-thirds of its length, was filled with shallow tin-boxes hermetically sealed, containing some eight thousand dollars' worth of choice Mechlin and other valuable laces! These, of course, were seized and confiscated; while the mutilated corpse went on its way, according to address.

The few examples herein given, as illustrated merely, will convey a faint idea of some of the difficulties the United States Secret Service had to encounter in the pursuit of its duty, and the shrewdness and boldness of the rogues with whom it has to deal! In order to effect such results, it is of supreme importance that there should be, at all times, a thorough understanding and cooperation between the United States Secret-Service Division and the local detective agencies, municipal or private, in the various parts of the country. This has been accomplished, and, by the aid of the telegraph, and other measures well understood among the detective forces, there is now a thorough understanding and unity of action among all these agencies, making it exceedingly difficult for a criminal to escape capture when once suspected.

We will now turn our attention from the exploits of the Secret Service, and make a short visit to the rooms described in the beginning of this sketch, where we shall find something that will interest us in connection with what we have already learned. It is true that there is the forbidding inscription of "Positively no admittance" over the entrance, but an order from the Secretary of the Treasury opens the doors to us, and, for once, the instructions on the card on the door do not apply to us. As we have already said, there is nothing very extraordinary in the appearance of the two rooms which constitute the headquarters in the national Capitol of the Secret-Service Division, nothing to distinguish them from the hundreds of other offices within the walls of the same vast building; they are cozy and comfortable, as they all are, plainly but neatly furnished; and the only thing that is apt to attract particular attention by seemingly out of place, are the aforesaid masquerade costumes, or veritable Ku-klux disguises, on the walls. These have been captured, with those who wore them, at various places in the South, within the last two years, mostly in Mississippi and Georgia, and are of very conceivable cut and color. The most ferocious-looking one is a full suit of cheap muslin; the pantaloons are black, with a broad red

stripe and the jacket, or blouse, of a blood-red color, with large black buttons. Attached to this suit (the regular “uniform” of the so-called RED ORDER, of Mississippi), is a pointed red cap, upon the front of which is a representation of a skull and crossed bones, in black ink. Above this device are the large letters

K. K. K.

Below it is the similarly inscribed word.

MORI.

The effect of the whole, drawn heavily in black on the red ground, is sufficiently horrible, in spite of the roughness of the execution, to make even the empty head-dress convey a decidedly disagreeable impression.

An ugly mask, made of black cambric, with a piece of white goat-skin attached, representing a head, completes this repulsive uniform. In the black-leather belt, which holds the blouse together, is stuck, encased in a sheath, a narrow-pointed dirk or knife, fully eighteen inches in length, with a common wooden handle. This constitutes the whole outfit, and is a fair specimen, although, perhaps, rather more ferocious-looking than on the average. It is also the only one to which is attached a knife, in a sheath, as the Ku-klux usually wore their bowie-knife in the leg of the right boot.

In each of the two offices is placed a large iron, burglar-proof safe, with combination locks, which serves as a receptacle and depository for plates, rolls, dies, moulds, paper, etc., etc., captured from counterfeiters. There are stored in these two safes upward of seven hundred thousand dollars' worth of counterfeit bank-notes, bonds, fractional currency, revenue-stamps, etc., and upward of ninety sets of the plates, rolls, dies, used in their manufacture. About two-thirds of this “cony” are of issues that have been withdrawn, and are no longer in circulation; but fully one-third are counterfeits of a recent date, and are, for the greater part, admirably executed.

It is quite interesting to look over the contents of these safes. The plates, which are mostly of copper, with some few of steel and German-silver, are in sets of two or three viz., the face, the back, and sometimes the tint. They are covered over with a thin film of wax, to preserve them from rust or oxidation, and are wrapped up by the sets in black cloth, and packed in strong wrapping-paper. Every set is numbered and put on record, which also gives the name of the engraver of the plate or set of plates, date of capture, and a short history of the case to which they belong. As the packages are opened, one by one, and their contents, exhibited to our glance, we finger, with a considerable degree of curiosity, the famous twenty-dollar plate, on the Shoe and Leather Bank, which figured so conspicuously in the Gurney case, and the complete set—face, back, and tint—of plates used by the same notorious criminal in the manufacture of his hundred-dollar compound-interest note. As we examine the plate for printing the back, with its fine scroll and lathe work—an exact fac-simile of the genuine note—our curiosity is mixed with an inexpressible feeling of sadness: that piece of work cost a young man both life and reputation.

Among the best-executed plates, the imprints of which for a long time defied detection, and were thrown upon the market in enormous quantities, are three sets of two-dollar plates (faces, backs, and tints, complete); eight sets of \$5's; five of \$10's; four of \$20's (among which is the celebrated Gurney "Shoe and Leather Bank" set of plates); one one-hundred-dollar compound-interest note; one one-hundred-dollar greenback; two unfinished fifty-dollar, seven-thirty noteplates; one one-thousand dollar U. S. bond plate; one one-thousand-dollar legal-tender, new issue, unfinished; two one-thousand-dollar railroad-bond plates; one unfinished five-twenty-bond plate(one thousand dollars); three twenty-five-cent fractional currency plates, Fessenden head; four twenty-five and fifty-cent old postal-currency plates; one fifteen-cent fractional-currency plate, seven fifty-cent fractional-currency plates of the "Spinner," "Lincoln," "Stanton," and "figure of Justice" heads(one, the "Lincoln," but partially finished); besides numerous parts of plates and rolls, each as pieces of highly finished imitation lathe-work, heads, numerals, and vignettes, etc., intended for use by the counterfeiters. There are, further, one two-ounce, one ten-pound, and four sixty-pound counterfeit tobacco-stamp plates; one twenty-five-cent beer-stamp plate; one two-cent check-stamp plate; three proprietary-stamp plates; and one one-cent match-stamp plate—all admirably executed, so as to defy detection, except to the eye of experts.

Of dies and moulds for manufacturing imitations of gold, silver, and nickel coin, there is also quite an assortment, among which two sets of dies for one-dollar gold-pieces, with a piece of the metal (an alloy of bronze and nickel) from which they were stamped. Also one set of two-and-a-half-dollar gold dies, three sets of "one dime" (ten cents) silver dies and moulds, and one set of "five-cent nickels" moulds. There is also in one of these safes a small tin box containing fifty thousand dollars' worth of counterfeit and "cleaned" revenue-stamps of the various classes and denominations, captured at the time of the breaking up of the notorious "Staten-Island gang" (in October, 1869), one of the most interesting exploits recorded in the annals of the Secret-Service Division, but for an account of which, in detail, which must be necessarily quite lengthy, we cannot make room at present. This box, with its contents, was found in the room of a well-known and (before his capture and conviction) very popular colonel in New-York City, who moved in the very best of society, and was, to all appearance, a gentleman. It was at the same capture that the one-thousand-dollar counterfeit United States bond plate, already referred to, was obtained.

Each of the safes contains a box filled with bogus gold, silver, and nickel coins, among which are several imitation twenty-dollar gold-pieces, eagles, and half-eagles (five-dollar gold). Among the former are several of the so-called *Spielmarken*, which were for a time successfully imposed upon immigrants in European (especially Hamburg and Bremen) ports as genuine money. They are very clumsily made, of some sort of base metal which soon corrodes and gets green, and bear upon the reverse the word "*Spielmarken*," and, underneath, the figures "20." Although this would scarcely deceive a native American—the less so as the weight is very light, this imposition weighing only about one-half of the genuine coin that it represents—yet it is well calculated to deceive immigrants and foreigners generally; and it was in this field that it was principally used. It took a long time, and necessitated considerable correspondence on the part of the Department of State, to which the matter was referred, before this outrage could be stopped.

Besides the articles described above, some thirty-four costly printing-presses have been seized, in the hands of counterfeiters, during the present management of the Secret-Service Division;

also, three transfer-presses and one perforating-machine, of the kind used in perforating the sheets of internal revenue and postage stamps.

All these things make up a most interesting and unique collection—the only one of its kind in America, if not in the world. But few outside of those who have been interested in their manufacture, use, and subsequent capture, have ever had their curiosity gratified by a view of these specimens, which are kept securely under lock and key. The Secret-Service Division is a *terra incognita* to most people; and the forbidding inscription upon its doors is never relaxed save by order of the Secretary of the Treasury or the chief of the division.

Not the least interesting feature in this museum of crime and cupidity is a scrap-book containing upward of a hundred specimens of the counterfeits that have ever been in circulation. This embraces legal-tenders, national-bank notes, fractional currency, postal currency, revenue-stamps of all descriptions, etc., etc. In saying “counterfeits,” the contents of this volume are not exactly described; for there are bills that have been “raised.” We thus see—or rather have our attention called to—a specimen, that is, apparently, a perfectly good and genuine fifty-dollar greenback; the engraving, Treasury seal, and all, are perfect; and we do not see how there can be any doubt of its genuineness. But a very close inspection reveals the fact that it is a *genuine two-dollar bill* that has been “raised,” by erasing the figure “2” and the word TWO, and the “inlaying,” as the technical term is, the figures “50” and the word FIFTY. The work is, however, most ingeniously done, both on the face and back; and the note would deceive everybody except an expert at bank-notes, thoroughly familiar with every detail in the design.

We are also shown several specimens of five-dollar and two-dollar bills which have been “related” in a similar manner to fifties and twenties. And there is one specimen—a genuine ten-dollar national-bank note—on which the figures and word announcing its denomination have been carefully erased by acids and otherwise, and the figures and word TWENTY *printed* on the blank spaces by the aid of a special plate engraved for the purpose—an improvement upon the pasting or “inlaying” method.

It is inexplicably sad to think, in glancing over this scrap-book, to how much better advantage the art and talent therein displayed might have been employed. Men, who, from their skill and industry, might to-day have held enviable positions in the trade to which they originally belonged, and in society generally, and have acquired handsome competencies by the honest exercise of their art, are at this moment languishing in prisons as convicts, because they wanted to make a “short cut” to fortune. Those cases are exceedingly few and far between in which counterfeiters have escaped the vigilance of the Secret Service and the just punishment of the law, even if temporary barriers have—as too frequently in the case of New-York City under the old *regimé*—been thrown in the way of justice.

Until the millennium shall come, crime, in all its forms and stages, will prove the necessity of systems of protection from the lawless. Criminals will continue to keep pace with the times, and perpetuate their frauds systematically—more especially so the class, or classes, with which the Secret Service has to deal. Only when it is considered that the “business” of counterfeiting, although temporarily broken up, is one resting upon the solid basis of hundreds of thousands of capital, affording, from time to time, an unrighteous support to many hundred people, and

pressing into its service the most subtle and ingenious minds, can the difficulties with which this branch of the government has to cope be approximately estimated. The Secret-Service Division is a gigantic machine, having its ramifications everywhere, and acts as a powerful instrument for good or evil, according to the hands that guide it. With all its energies directed toward the suppression of fraudulent practices throughout the land, it is a lasting terror to evil-doers, and a preventive, as well as a detector, of crime in all its phases. It is with pleasure that we accord to the present efficient chief of our national police, in closing this brief sketch of the operations of his division, the well-deserved encomium of the Scriptures, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant!"

LOUIS BAGGER

Appletons' Journal, September 20, 1873